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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: September 21, 1959

SUBJECT: French Reply to Khrushchev

PARTICIPANTS: M. Claude Label, Minister, French Embassy

Mr. Robert H. McBride, WE  
Mr. Charles G. Stefan, SOV  
Mr. L. Dean Brown, WE

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M. Label said that he had the text of General de Gaulle's reply to Khrushchev's letter of August 16. He did not know when it had been delivered. He proceeded to read it but did give us a copy. Following is a summary:

1. A real detente leading to general and controlled disarmament is needed.
2. The Berlin situation was brought about by the Soviets and is not of a nature as to favor rapprochement or co-existence.
3. Compared to the real major problems, Berlin is of a secondary nature.
4. If there were a detente, we could work out a modus vivendi for Berlin.
5. France strives to help improve East-West relations.
6. For this reason France has abstained from saying that the reunification of Germany is an immediate necessity.
7. France also believes that so far as frontiers are concerned, what exists is best.
8. France believes a free and solid Federal Republic is needed and should be in NATO.

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9. The Federal Republic is not the menace the Soviet note states.

10. If France felt menaced by Germany, it would assure its security and would think of concerting herein with the Soviets, despite the fact that the Soviets unilaterally denounced the wartime alliance.

11. France does not, however, believe itself menaced by Western Germany.

12. The Federal Republic of 1959 is not the Germany of Hitler; the Soviet Union of 1959 is not that of 1941. France cannot see how today's Soviet Union can feel itself threatened by Bonn.

13. The fact that the Federal Republic has close relations with France is a guarantee of peace.

14. The time has come to assert that European cooperation is necessary.

15. The Soviet Union should assure the future of its relations with Western Germany.

16. Western Germany has no ambitions for revenge. It is needed for the balance of Europe.

M. Lebel then said that the U.K. and Federal Republic were also being advised of the tenor of General de Gaulle's reply. France does not intend to circulate the reply in NATO.

Mr. Stefan thanked M. Lebel but made no substantive comment on the French reply.

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